LOOK WHO'S BACK!

BEYONCÉ

talks to *Cosmo* about men, sex and butter pecan ice cream. Oh, and why she took a year out to spend more time with her man, rapper Jay-Z...

Interview LOUISE GANNON

The past 12 months have proved a massive milestone in Beyoncé's life. And for once, it's not because she's added to her 16 Grammy awards or personal fortune of £300million. It's because she took time out. A whole year of down time, to be precise, and the 29-year-old's first break since she was 15. Which may be why, sat in this luxurious New York hotel, giggling and joking, Beyoncé seems more relaxed than ever. But she's not just here to make *Cosmo* laugh (though we're a very willing audience). Beyoncé has emerged from her career sabbatical for good reason: to launch her highly seductive second fragrance, Heat Rush. Just the excuse *Cosmo* needs to meet up with the ultimate kick-ass pop star and get under her skin. It's time to discover what *really* makes this strong, sexy, super-businesswoman tick. So here, in a rare interview, Beyoncé opens up – and *Cosmo*'s here to listen…

What do you love about having your own fragrances?

"I'm a real girly girl. I feel like fragrance is one of the most important accessories a woman can have – it's sexy, it says something, and it's that final touch, like putting on a gorgeous pair of stilettos. One of the things I remember from being a little girl is how I loved watching my mother [Tina] getting ready to go out, and she'd spray on her perfume. It was this gorgeous blast that would linger in the room after she'd gone and it would remind me of her. I thought it was so sophisticated and glamorous, so feminine and sexy. To me, even if you are dressed to kill and everything is looking fabulous, you are still not done without that touch of fragrance. It's the cherry on top of the cake. What I love about making my own perfume – which has a little scent of Brazilian cherry in it, with orange and passion fruit – is getting to leave my own little mark on the world,

my fragrance, which I hope will linger for some time."

What does Jay-Z think about your fragrance – does he have a favourite?

[Laughs] "Oh, are you *kidding?* One of the most important aspects of my perfume is that they get his seal of approval. When you wear a perfume, you want your man to love it. He loves my scents because he was part of the decision-making process. I wouldn't wear a scent if he didn't like it."

How should a man smell to be sexy?

"A man should never be too overbearing with his scent. I've been in too many elevators next to too many men with strong aftershave, and it's a total turn-off. With men, a scent should be subtle, clean and fresh, and just make you want to lean in to smell more. That's sexy."

When you were younger, how did you think your life would be at 30?

"This is really funny but when I was younger I thought I'd be retired by 30. Now I'm nearly there I can't believe how much more I want to do. I never imagined I'd have as much success as I've had. I thought it would be great just to get a record out. I never imagined the extent of what I've achieved, I never imagined the awards, the movies… I still can't believe it. I'm grateful for all of it and don't take it for granted. When I do something, I try and do it as well as I can."

Hitting 30 is a milestone for women – it's the time when our lives maybe move into marriage and babies and growing up. How do you feel about it?

"My attitude is, there is always room for growth. I feel more comfortable about expressing myself, more in control and yes, I do want to embrace what happens next – and family. It's funny how your outlook changes as you get older, how you look at life, at other women, in a different way. I have so much admiration for women who are mothers, who balance family and work. I see them and I have this word in my head: respect. I also look to learn. I see these women and I think, 'Yes, it *can* be balanced, it *can* all work out.' I do believe that it's possible to have it all – work, a career, babies… It's all a question of being very organised. That's what I'm getting my head around."

What has been a huge milestone for you this year?

"This is an easy one. I gave myself a break – I took a year off. Now that sounds very indulgent but I've worked since the age of 15, and never taken any time out. My life has always been about next, next, next, and moving on. I just decided I had to stop. It was the best decision I've ever made, and definitely a milestone. I took time out, spent time with my man, my friends, my family. I got to sleep in my bed night after night, which is a massive thing for me. I often don't get to sleep in the same bed twice for months because of moving from one place to the next. I travelled as a tourist, I took in culture, ballet, art exhibitions, went to restaurants, ate really good food… It was amazing."

Did you get to be a traditional stay-at-home wife to Jay-Z?

[Laughs] "Yes! I even did some cooking, although I didn't really enjoy that. I'm not the greatest cook – I can do good things with oxtail, though. It was great just having the time to be a wife rather than this non-stop travelling career girl."

How easy was it just to switch off? Were you tempted to get busy again?

"I was, but on my own terms. I did all these things I wanted to do that I don't have time for. I set up a production company, learnt how to edit, did a bit of recording and directed a DVD. What was great was having this normal life of sleeping, getting up, going to an office and then coming home. Coming home is a wonderful thing."

The ad for your last perfume, Heat, was deemed too sexy for TV. Do you think society still gets hung up about a woman showing her sexuality?

"It was *too* hot [laughs]. I wasn't annoyed, I thought it was funny. Personally, I don't think my ad was any more crazy sexy than other ads out there – I loved it, despite whatever anyone else thought. It was based on a really hot George Michael video and yes, it was sexy, but then you ›

have to think about what you're doing. It was for my fragrance and I believe a wonderful fragrance brings out the sex appeal in a woman. That was what I was trying to express. I don't regret it."

What makes a woman sexy?

"The most alluring thing a woman can have is confidence. You can be beautiful but if you're not secure in yourself, you don't come across as sexy. You have to feel good about yourself to make others feel good about you."

What advice would you give to women who don't feel body confident?

"Don't focus on all the bits you don't like. Look at yourself in a different way and work out what it is you *do* like. Try on lots of dresses and learn what silhouette suits you best. I love my sister's style but she's way thinner than me and what looks great on her doesn't look great on me, so I go my own way. I'd also say work on those bits you don't like. I'd love to have athletic legs but I don't. I do, however, work on my legs a lot when I exercise to try and get near that shape. No one is perfect but everyone has the opportunity to make the best of themselves."

What are your rules of seduction?

"Put on good music and something that makes you feel great. I love a pair of high, sexy stilettos with a beautiful dress, but you have to find what works for you – whether it's doing the whole smoky eyes thing or a natural look. And never be predictable. Mix it up, surprise him, change your hair – be the woman he knows with a little bit of a twist."

You are a role model to millions of women. What's the best advice one woman can give to another?

"I want to say just two things. Learn the power of the word 'no.' A lot of women spend their lives saying yes to everyone, trying to please them. That's what I used to do. Just learn to say no and take back control of your own life. The other is something I learnt from Oprah Winfrey, which is visualising goals. Work out what you want from life, write those things down and look at them and believe you can attain them. I write down my goals and it definitely works for me."

How do you deal with your own body-confidence issues?

"I've learnt to accept what I have and work on those areas I can change. I don't obsess. I love my butter pecan ice cream, but I also love to work out. We all have our issues. Mine is arms and legs, keeping them tight and toned. It takes work, believe me, but I do believe in putting in that work."

Whose body do you admire?

"I think all women look at other women and go, 'Wow.' I love Halle Berry – she has great arms, and Kim Kardashian is gorgeous with all those curves. And Naomi Campbell has a fantastic body."

So, Beyoncé, are there any male bodies that you drool over?

[Laughs] "Only one. Just one guy, and I think you can guess who that is." ◆

Beyoncé's new fragrance, Heat Rush, is available nationwide from 6 April.

THE COSMO QUIZ

Name: Beyencé

Nickname: B

I feel sexiest when I'm:
a) Dressed down in jeans and a T-shirt
b) Wearing a red-carpet dress
c) In cute lingerie at home
d) Naked
e) Other...
Just out of the shower in my mans T-Shirt

My favourite part of my body is:
a) My butt
b) My legs
c) My stomach
d) My boobs
e) Other...
My Eyes

The most important thing in my makeup bag is...
My Ipod

My biggest beauty sin is...
Sometimes I am too lazy to wash my makeup off at night

My biggest beauty treat is...
Swimming in the ocean and Exfoliating with the Sand

If I'm feeling down I boost my confidence by...
Dressing up.
Wearing my Favorite Ensemble

If I could trade lives with another woman for a day ~~it would be...~~
U can call me KING B ☺

The best advice I've been given in the past 12 months is...
U never know how strong you are until Being strong is your only choice

This time next year I hope to be...
Continue Happy with inner peace

My biggest fashion and beauty lesson my mum taught me is...
Find out what works for your Body type & personality

You'd be shocked to find out that I've never...
Gone a week without wearing heels

If I weren't a singer, I'd love to be...
A psychiatrist

The time in my life I felt at my happiest was...
A) April 4th 2008*
B) At my nepheus Birth
c) the day destiny's child got a record deal
d) The year I took my First real vacation
e) All of the above

*The rumoured date of her wedding

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